

Message Text

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62

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

INR-05 NSAE-00 SAM-01 L-01 IO-04 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01

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R 291715Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6072

INFO SECDEF

USCINCEUR

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COMSIXTHFLT

COMDESRON TWELVE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ATHENS 7812

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, GR, US

SUBJ: SAILOR STEALS GREEK FLAG IN ELEFSIS

1. LATE ON EVENING OF OCTOBER 26 A SAILOR FROM USS PAGE, ONE OF HOMEPORTED DESTROYERS, WAS OBSERVED STEALING GREEK FLAG FROM BUILDING ON ELEFSIS WATERFRONT. GREEK FLAGS WERE DISPLAYED ON VIRTUALLY EVERY BUILDING IN COMMEMORATION OF OCHI DAY, AN IMPORTANT PATRIOTIC HOLIDAY. ON OCTOBER 28, 1940, GOG REPLIED "OCHI" OR "NO" TO ITALIAN DEMAND FOR BASES IN GREECE, THUS PRECIPITATING ITALIAN INVASION OF GREECE. SAILOR WAS APPREHENDED WITH FLAG BY GROUP OF ELEFSINIANS WHILE HIS LIBERTY-MATE, WHO HAD DECLINED TO TAKE PART IN CAPER, FLED TO HOMEPORTING PIER, LATER TO BE APPREHENDED BY USN SHORE PATROL. BOTH MEN TAKEN TO ELEFSIS POLICE, WHO DID NOT REGARD INCIDENT AS SERIOUS. HOWEVER, BOTH MEN WERE REFERRED ON OCTOBER 28 TO ELEFSIS DISTRICT ATTORNEY, WHO REMANDED CULPRIT TO THREE-MEMBER COURT FOR PROSECUTION ON DECEMBER 2 SINCE "GREEK LAW BROKEN" BUT DID NOT LODGE CHARGE AGAINST SECOND

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SAILOR. DA'S ACTION APPEARED UNEMOTIONAL AND UNBIASED.

2. INCIDENT RECEIVED INITIAL PRESS COVERAGE ON LAST PAGE OF OCTOBER 28 AFTERNOON PAPERS, TYPICALLY CARRIED WITH SMALL HEADING "AMERICAN TAKES DOWN GREEK FLAG." IN OCTOBER 29 MORNING PRESS, KATHIMERINE AND VIMA CARRIED SIMILAR SMALL ITEMS ON BACK PAGE BUT ACROPOLIS CARRIED BOTH MORE DETAILED AND SOMEWHAT INFLAMMATORY STORY ON PAGE 5 (QUOTING PICTURED GREEK, WHO APPREHENDED SAILOR, AS BEING DISAPPOINTED BECAUSE PRESENCE OF AUTHORITIES PREVENTED LYNCHING OF AMERICAN), WITH ACCOMPANYING PHOTOGRAPH AND EDITORIAL LINKING SUBJECT INCIDENT WITH RECENT PUBLIC STIR OVER ABC TV FILM CLIP SHOWING ABOUT CYPRUS SITUATION AT AIR BASE AS ALLOWING "THE IMPRESSION THAT SOME ANTI-HELLENIC PROPAGANDA IS CONDUCTED BY RESPONSIBLE US OFFICIALS ON THE VARIOUS BASES.

3. OCTOBER 29 AFTERNOON PRESS STILL CARRIED STORY, WHICH APOGEVMATINI PLACING IT ON FRONTPAGE WITH PICTURE AND CARRYING COMPANION STORY ON ELEFSINIANS' REACTIONS ON PAGE 5. NEA CARRIED FRONT PAGE STORY ABOUT THREE GREEK YOUTHS HAULING DOWN US FLAG FROM FRONT OF FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK IN KOLONAKI SQUARE AS EXPRESSION OF PROTEST FOR SAILOR'S ACT, WHILE ATHENAIKI PREDICTABLY TAKES OPPORTUNITY IN EDITORIAL TO BLAME INCIDENT ON CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT'S EXCESSIVE CONCERN FOR GREEK-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP.

4. COMMENT: WE ARE CONTINUING TO IMPOSE STRINGENT CONTROLS ON US MILITARY ACTIVITIES TO PREVENT INCIDENTS OF THIS KIND AND ARE RECEIVING FULL COOPERATION OF US MILITARY COMMANDERS IN THIS CONNECTION. IN VIEW SEHEDULED APPEARANCE OF PASOK LEADER PAPANDREOU FOR PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED POLITICAL RALLY IN ELEFSIS OCTOBER 30 ALL SHORE LEAVE FOR PERSONNEL OF HOMEPORING DESTROYERS HAS BEEN SUSPENDED FURING PERIOD OF POLITICAL RALLY.
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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